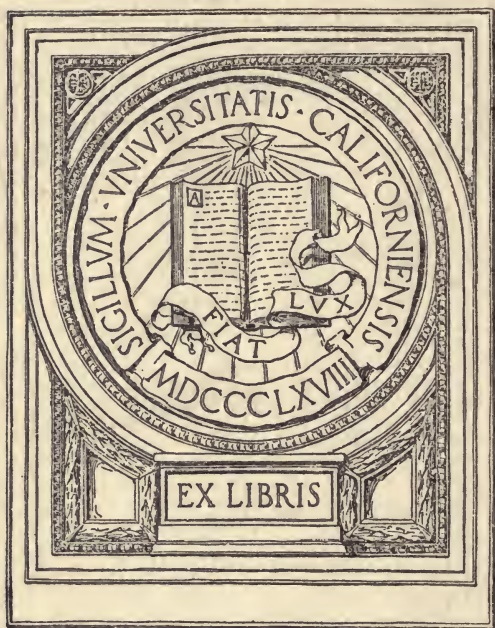


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[Dyloanus Griswold Morley]

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE BOOKS OF
CHILAN BALAM

PERHAPS the nearest approach in the New World to a recorded aboriginal history was achieved by the Maya peoples of Central America and Southern Mexico, who have left behind them hundreds of hieroglyphic inscriptions embodying an elaborate chronology. The early Spanish chroniclers explicitly state that the Mayas of Yucatan possessed historical records, at the time of the Conquest, which contained not only the reckoning of their years, or chronologies proper, but also other ancient matters, such as the occurrence of wars, famines, pestilences, and hurricanes. In the face of such direct evidence, it can hardly be denied that at least some of the Mayas possessed a recorded history, preserved in their picture manuscripts which were accessible as late as the middle of the sixteenth century.

In 1542 the Spaniards under Francisco Montejo effected the permanent occupation of Yucatan. This event, as it were, sounded the death knell of all native institutions. The Spanish priests at once applied themselves to the task of converting the heathen, and everything pertaining to the ancient civilization was speedily obliterated. Particularly, hieroglyphic manuscripts were zealously ferreted out and ruthlessly destroyed.

Diego de Landa, the second Bishop of Yucatan,¹ says in this connection, "We found a great number of books in these characters (that is, in hieroglyphics), and because they contained nothing but superstitions and lies of the Devil, we burned them all, the which was felt keenly, and gave them (the natives) pain."

¹ *Relacion de los Cosas de Yucatan*, Diego de Landa, Paris, 1864, p. 317.
American Journal of Archaeology, Second Series. Journal of the
Archaeological Institute of America, Vol. XV (1911), No. 2.

This treatment soon had its desired effect. The manners and customs of former times passed into disrepute, decay, and finally oblivion. The natives abandoned their pagan rites and, outwardly at least, conformed to the observances of the Church of Rome. Amidst this general collapse of aboriginal institutions, however, and in spite of ecclesiastical discouragement, there arose a class of native writings called The Books of Chilán Balam, which were destined to preserve for us practically all that we now know of the ancient history of Yucatan.

These manuscripts were written in the Maya language with the letters of the Spanish alphabet, reënforced here and there by additional characters to represent sounds wanting in Spanish. The literary instinct of the Maya people, abruptly checked in purely native channels of expression such as the hieroglyphics, seems to have sought relief in this new writing, which had been prepared by the priesthood to facilitate conversion. This partially Hispanicized Maya lent itself readily to the expressions of the native mind, and soon there came to be, even before the close of the sixteenth century, or within fifty years of the Conquest, quite a number of these Books of Chilán Balam, the works of native writers. Each one was distinguished from the others by the addition of the name of the place where it was written, as the Book of Chilán Balam of Mani, The Book of Chilán Balam of Nabula, The Book of Chilán Balam of Tizimin, manuscripts which emanated respectively from the towns of Mani, Nabula, and Tizimin. The name Chilán Balam was the title applied by the Mayas to a certain class of their priests who taught their sciences, appointed their holy days, offered sacrifices, and delivered oracles. A free translation of the names of these books would therefore be: "The Book of the Priest Soothsayer of Mani," "The Book of the Priest Soothsayer of Nabula," and so on. According to Dr. D. G. Brinton, the contents of these native productions may be divided into four classes:¹ first, astrological and prophetic matters; second, medical recipes and directions; third, post-conquest history and Christian teachings; fourth, ancient chronology and history.

Of these, the last only, that dealing with the ancient chronology and history of Yucatan, concerns us here.

¹ *Essays of an Americanist*, Daniel G. Brinton, Philadelphia, 1890, p. 259.

Of the sixteen books of Chilán Balam¹ which have survived the vicissitudes of the last three centuries, either in whole or in part, three only, the Mani, Tizimin, and Chumayel manuscripts, contain these ancient chronologies or historical summaries. The Mani and Tizimin manuscripts each contain one of these chronicles, and the Chumayel manuscript three, making a total of five in all. But the last account in the Chumayel manuscript is of little value in restoring the ancient chronology of Yucatan, since it does not present a consecutive succession of time periods as do the other four, but only an alternation of certain particular periods, notably Katuns 4 Ahau and 13 Ahau. Indeed, as Dr. Brinton has pointed out,² it does not appear to be a chronicle at all, but rather a chant to refer certain incidents to their proper katuns, and for this reason it has not been consulted so extensively as the others.

Maya history is presented in these chronicles as a succession of time periods, opposite each of which is recorded the proper events, if any, for that period. These records partake rather more of the nature of historical summaries than extended narratives, and may be best described as chronological outlines of the principal events of Maya history. The unit of enumeration for counting time in them was a period of seventy-two hundred days, called by the Mayas the katun, which was equal in length to something less than twenty of our own years. Each katun was named after the day with which the preceding katun ended, always the day Ahau, to which a numerical coefficient ranging from 1 to 13 was attached. These followed one another in a retrograding order, the coefficient of each being two less in number than that of the one immediately preceding. Katun 8 Ahau, Katun 6 Ahau, Katun 4 Ahau, Katun 2 Ahau; Katun 13 Ahau, Katun 11 Ahau, and so on, until after Katun 10 Ahau, when the next in order was Katun 8 Ahau again, and the sequence repeated itself. This method of fixing a date, barring an initial leeway of about twenty years, the length of a katun, insured accuracy within a period of thirteen times nineteen and three-quarters years, or two hundred and fifty-six years. This must necessarily be true, since any given katun

¹ *Essays of an Americanist*, Daniel G. Brinton, p. 257.

² *The Maya Chronicles*, D. G. Brinton, Philadelphia, 1882, p. 177.

could not recur until after a lapse of two hundred and fifty-six years, and consequently the position of any event stated as having occurred in any given katun was fixed within that length of time. Moreover, as long as the sequence of the katuns remained unbroken, and the sets of thirteen katuns followed each other without interruptions or omissions, accuracy within a much greater period of time was insured; in fact, as long as the units of the sequence remained consecutive.

This brings us to a consideration of the most severe and damaging criticism which has been levelled against the chronicles of The Books of Chilán Balam, as reliable sources for the reconstruction of Maya history.

In some places in the chronicles there are clearly breaks in the order in which the katuns follow each other. For example, in one place, a Katun 11 Ahau is followed by a Katun 8 Ahau instead of Katun 9 Ahau; and again, in another passage, a Katun 1 Ahau is followed by a Katun 6 Ahau instead of Katun 12 Ahau. Other instances where the sequence of the katuns is similarly interrupted might be cited, but these two are sufficient to show how the continuity of the sequence fails at times. The question at once arises, How are these breaks in the order of the katuns to be accounted for? How have they arisen, and how may they be obviated? In the case cited, for example, where a Katun 11 Ahau is followed by a Katun 8 Ahau, is the intervening gap to be filled by the missing katuns, 9 Ahau, 7 Ahau, 5 Ahau, 3 Ahau, 1 Ahau, 12 Ahau, and 10 Ahau? Or, are we to regard this Katun 8 Ahau merely as a repetition of some former Katun 8 Ahau in the sequence, and the katuns following it, until Katun 11 Ahau is reached again, as a reduplication in the record? One of these two conditions must necessarily explain the observed breaks in the sequence, since no others are possible. A careful study of the several chronicles has convinced me that defects in the record are due to both of these causes; that sometimes katuns have been omitted, and again as clearly repeated; and that both omissions and repetitions are equally responsible for the present interruptions of the sequence.

Having pointed out how the breaks in the sequence of the katuns have arisen, and consequently how they may be obviated,

let us examine some of those points which tend to establish the accuracy of the chronicles. The strongest recommendation for the chronicles is their close agreement with one another, in spite of the fact that the original manuscripts themselves have never been accessible for study and comparison. Indeed, the only available texts up to the present time have been second-hand copies of the originals, while the English translations based upon them have been proved to be misleading and, in some cases, inaccurate. Yet, in spite of these conditions so pregnant with possibilities for error, the available texts exhibit a similarity of detail which is little short of remarkable, and it is highly indicative of their reliability that from the discovery of Chichen Itza down to the Spanish Conquest, a period of about eleven hundred years, there is always at least one of the chronicles which carries on the sequence of the katuns unbroken. Some sixty years ago, Dr. Carl Berendt visited Yucatan, and while there copied by hand as many of the ancient manuscripts as he could find, among others a number of The Books of Chilán Balam. After his death, his papers came into the possession of Dr. D. G. Brinton of the University of Pennsylvania; and this eminent Americanist, realizing the extreme importance of some parts of the manuscripts which had fallen into his hands, translated the chronological portions and published them, together with an extensive commentary of his own, as *The Maya Chronicles*. Until very recently, at least, the Berendt texts and the Brinton translation of them have been the only sources for a comparative study of the several chronicles, although one chronicle, that from The Book of Chilán Balam of Mani, was printed some seventy years ago in both Maya and English, by John L. Stephens in his *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*.¹ It will be seen from the foregoing that here is a ready-made explanation for many of the present disagreements between the texts of the several chronicles. For no matter how carefully Dr. Berendt made his copies from the originals, the personal equation, nevertheless, influenced the final result.

Another cause, doubtless, which has contributed to the ob-

¹ *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, John L. Stevens, New York, 1843, Vol. II, pp. 465 ff.

served disagreements among the several chronicles, is the inaccuracy of the present English translation. Mr. C. P. Bowditch, for example, has shown that the Brinton translation of the names of the katuns, such as the fifth Ahau, the third Ahau, and the first Ahau, is incorrect, and that the numbers should have been translated by cardinals instead of ordinals, as five Ahau, three Ahau, and one Ahau. This difference, so far as the chronological accuracy of the texts is concerned, is of minor importance, but it would appear from the following that more vital mistakes may have been made, which actually render the chronicles contradictory in regard to events of the greatest consequence.

One of the most important events in Maya history is the foundation of Uxmal, which significant circumstance, strange to say, is recorded in only two of the five chronicles, and then with a disagreement of nearly two hundred years. It is difficult to understand how such an accurate people as the Mayas could have become so confused in regard to such an important event as the foundation of their second largest city, as to have assigned to it dates differing from each other by nearly two hundred years. The accompanying parallel shows the parts of the Mani and Tizimin chronicles which deal with the foundation of Uxmal, arranged side by side, the former on the left, the latter on the right.

MANI MANUSCRIPT ¹			TIZIMIN MANUSCRIPT ²		
Katun 8 Ahau	Chakanputun	was abandoned.	Katun 8 Ahau	Chakanputun	was abandoned.
Katun 6 Ahau			Katun 6 Ahau		
Katun 4 Ahau	Two-score years (two katuns) had passed when "they" came and established their homes a second time and they lost Chakanputun.		Katun 4 Ahau	Two-score years (two katuns) and "they" came and established their houses a second time when they lost the road to Chakanputun.	
Katun 2 Ahau	Aheuitok Tutul Xiu founded Uxmal.		Katun 2 Ahau		
Katun 13 Ahau			Katun 13 Ahau		
Katun 11 Ahau			Katun 11 Ahau		

¹ *The Maya Chronicles*, D. G. Brinton, pp. 96, 102.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 140, 145, 146.

MANI MANUSCRIPT		TIZIMIN MANUSCRIPT	
Katun 9 Ahau		Katun 9 Ahau	
Katun 7 Ahau		Katun 7 Ahau	
Katun 5 Ahau		Katun 5 Ahau	
Katun 3 Ahau		Katun 3 Ahau	
Katun 1 Ahau		Katun 1 Ahau	
Katun 12 Ahau		Katun 12 Ahau	
Katun 10 Ahau	Ten-score years (ten katuns) they ruled with the governor of Chichen Itza and Mayapan.	Katun 10 Ahau	Abzuitok Tutul Xiu founded Uxmal. Ten-score years (ten katuns) had passed <i>when</i> they established the territory of Uxmal.

The striking similarity between these two versions is at once apparent. Both accounts agree that Chakanputun was abandoned in a Katun 8 Ahau. Both agree, further, that in the two katuns next following, Katuns 6 Ahau and 4 Ahau, the Itzas, here referred to as "they," returned to their former homes and established themselves there a second time. In the katun next following, Katun 2 Ahau, the Mani manuscript records the foundation of Uxmal by a certain Ahcuitok Tutul Xiu. The corresponding katun in the Tizimin manuscript, however, has no entry against it; and from this point the record in both chronicles is silent, save for the bare enumeration of the intervening katuns, until Katun 10 Ahau is reached. The Mani manuscript records after this Katun 10 Ahau that for the two hundred years just past, that is, since the foundation of Uxmal, in Katun 2 Ahau, the governors of Uxmal, Chichen Itza, and Mayapan had ruled together. The entry opposite the corresponding katun in the Tizimin manuscript is noteworthy. It states that a certain Ahzuitok Tutul Xiu founded Uxmal, and that two hundred years had passed when this happened. The identity of this name with that given by the Mani manuscript to the founder of Uxmal can hardly be doubted, since the two differ from each other by one letter only, and consequently both probably refer to one and the same individual.

This develops an exceedingly close similarity between the two versions. Both accounts agree as to the founder's name; both agree as to the sequence and names of the katuns in this

part of the record, and finally both agree as to a two hundred years summary after Katun 10 Ahau. In fact, the only actual disagreement between the two accounts, so far as the foundation of Uxmal is concerned, is one of date, the Mani manuscript setting the event two hundred years in advance of the time given in the Tizimin manuscript. In view of such close similarity with regard to the other details, it would seem as though this disagreement in date might perhaps be apparent rather than real, and consequently capable of explanation. Let us examine once more the entry in the Tizimin manuscript dealing with this event. According to both the Berendt text and the Brinton translation, the first part of the entry, "Ahzuitok Tutul Xiu founded Uxmal," is exactly the same in wording as the entry in the Mani manuscript against Katun 2 Ahau. The latter part of the entry in the Tizimin version reads as follows: "Ten-score years had passed when they established the territory of Uxmal." It will be noted that this passage is so worded that a change in the translation of but a single word is sufficient to reconcile the two versions with each other, and to bring them into agreement regarding the date of this important event. If the adverbial particle "ca" could be translated "since" instead of "when," as given, the entry in the Tizimin manuscript would read: "Ahzuitok Tutul Xiu founded Uxmal. Ten-score years had passed since they established the territory of Uxmal." And counting back these ten-score years we reach the same Katun 2 Ahau against which, in the Mani manuscript, is recorded the same event, and the two texts no longer contradict each other.

It is a well-known trait of American languages, that their adverbial particles have a wide range of meanings, and that such meanings as "when" and "since" are well within the scope of a single particle. For example, in the Tiwa language as spoken at Taos, New Mexico, the element "xan" signifies: then, when, whenever, since, because, therefore, you know.¹ Indeed, examples of the wide range of meanings which some particles may cover might be multiplied throughout American

¹ 'An Introductory Paper in the Tiwa Language, Dialect of Taos, New Mexico,' *Papers of the School of American Archaeology*, No. 14, by John P. Harrington.

linguistics. It would seem, therefore, that the Maya particle "ca" might possibly be translated "since" without undue violence to the native construction, and consequently that the disagreement in regard to the date of the foundation of Uxmal between the Mani and Tizimin texts might be obviated. This question, however, is purely one of linguistics, and is capable of a very definite answer one way or the other. This suggestion is only advanced here as a possible explanation for the observed disagreement in the Brinton texts.

Apart from this question of errors, however, which may be due to inaccurate texts or faulty translations, the chronicles have in themselves many characteristics which make for their reliability. In the first place two of the chronicles at least, those from The Books of Chilán Balam of Mani¹ and Tizimin,² were composed before the close of the sixteenth century, probably by natives who had grown to manhood before the Conquest, and who had, therefore, had ample opportunity to acquire a first hand knowledge of their history before the light of the ancient learning had flickered out. Says Dr. Brinton in this connection:³ "Relying on their memories, and no doubt aided by some of the ancient hieroglyphic manuscripts carefully secreted from the vandalism of the monks, they (the natives) wrote out what they could recollect of their national literature." The writers of these native books were probably, in most cases, the elders of the villages, and as such vividly remembered the pre-conquest days; moreover, they may have had, as Dr. Brinton suggests, some of their old hieroglyphic manuscripts containing the very chronicles which they copied into The Books of Chilán Balam. At all events, their conditions of life were such that their authorship of the chronicles considerably enhances the value of these native manuscripts as historical sources.

Another equally strong recommendation in favor of the accuracy of the chronicles, is their general agreement with each other, which, as has been pointed out, is capable of being extended even further than the Brinton translation indicates. This harmony of record appears to advantage in the closing katuns of the sequence, Katuns 4 Ahau, 2 Ahau, 13 Ahau,

¹ *The Maya Chronicles*, D. G. Brinton, p. 70.

² *Ibid.* p. 136.

³ *Ibid.* p. 68.

11 Ahau, 9 Ahau, and 7 Ahau. Three of the four chronicles agree that in this Katun 4 Ahau there was a pestilence and general death, the remaining chronicle having no entry for the period. Three out of the four agree that a certain native chief died in Katun 13 Ahau, the remaining account placing this same event at the very beginning of the next katun. All four agree that the Spaniards arrived in Katun 11 Ahau, that Christianity was introduced and Bishop Toral arrived in Katun 9 Ahau, and finally that Bishop Landa died in Katun 7 Ahau. This agreement is remarkable, and indicates that the natives were able to date events in their own system of chronology with perfect ease and accuracy; another strong point in favor of the reliability of *The Books of Chilan Balam* as sources for the reconstruction of Maya history.

The early Spanish historians of Yucatan, Lizana, Landa, Herrera, and Cogolludo, were almost exclusively churchmen, and busied themselves more with things spiritual or Spanish than with things temporal or native. Conquest, conversion, church and civil organization, and contemporary happenings interested them far more than the ancient history of a race whose religion they regarded as the handiwork of the Devil, and whose records they destroyed whenever able. And yet, scattered here and there throughout the early Spanish histories, are many passages which substantiate the native chronicles and corroborate the native chronology. It would take us too far afield here to more than briefly note the presence of these corroboratory passages in the early Spanish writers; the subject is comprehensive and involves lengthy comparisons, which lie beyond the limits of the present paper. It must suffice in this connection, therefore, merely to call attention to the fact that the writings of Lizana, Landa, Cogolludo, Herrera, and Villagutierre contain passages which, so far as they go, confirm the accuracy of the native versions of the same events.

It appears to me, in conclusion, that the chronicles from *The Books of Chilan Balam* have much to recommend them as reliable sources for the reconstruction of Maya history. When these records fail to agree, which is the exception rather than the rule, it has been shown that in some cases, at least, disa-

greement may have arisen from errors in copying or translation, for which the original texts themselves cannot be held responsible. Again it has been shown that in age, authorship, subject matter, and general agreement, these native chronicles are such that they constitute their own best guarantee of truthfulness. In view of these facts and one other, that they are almost the only native sources left to us for the recovery of the main events of Maya history, we are justified in accepting them for what they themselves purport to be : The Maya Chronicles.

There follows below, the outline of Maya history as presented by the chronicles from The Books of Chilán Balam, augmented here and there by additions from early Spanish sources.

OUTLINE OF MAYA HISTORY

In the records of most peoples there is a point beyond which history does not extend, but from which mythology carries back the annals, usually to a divine origin of man. There are strong indications that the first entries in the Maya chronicles are of such a nature, and that the events they record belong to the realm of fancy rather than fact.

Of the Maya chronicles, however, only two, those from the Mani and Tizimin manuscripts, go back into a past which seems to be at all unsubstantial; the others begin with later events which are clearly of an historical nature. There are three events in these first entries of the Mani and Tizimin manuscripts of which the first is probably wholly and the other two largely fictitious :

1. The departure from the House Nonoual, the home of the Tutul Xiu in the Land of Tulapan from Zuiva at the west.
2. The arrival under Holon Chantepeuh at the Land of Chacnabiton.
3. The arrival under Ahmekat Tutul Xiu at the Land of Chaenabiton.

Concerning the opening event, which is recorded only in the Mani manuscript, Dr. Brinton has shown¹ that three out of the four proper names with which it deals, Nonoual, Tulapan, and Zuiva, are not Mayan at all, but are purely Nahuatl, and that furthermore they belong to Nahuatl mythology and not to Nahuatl history. They are, in fact, identical with three locali-

¹ *The Maya Chronicles*, D. G. Brinton, pp. 109 ff.

ties in the Quetzalcoatl legend of Nahuatl mythology. The presence of Nahuatl mythological place-names in the earliest entry of the Maya Chronicles is of itself sufficient to discredit the historical character of the passage in which they appear. Their occurrence may perhaps be explained on the ground that this entry was fabricated at a late date when the Mayas had come under Nahuatl influence, *i.e.*, during the Fourth Period. The presence of the name Tutul Xiu in this same entry may be due to the fact that the Mani manuscript was compiled at the Xiu capital, and that it is a result of local pride and the desire to assign extreme antiquity to the Xiu ancestry.

The second event may have some historic foundation. Holon Chantepeuh may well have been one of the early Maya leaders, perhaps one of the band which settled at Bakhalal, and Chacnabiton probably was the name of some well-known terrestrial locality. The chief objection to this entry, and one which applies to the next as well, is the break in the sequence of the katuns at this point in the record, which makes it difficult to assign these events to their proper positions in Maya history.

The third event, in addition to the uncertainty of its true position in Maya history, is doubtful on another account. Bishop Landa distinctly states that the Tutul Xiu were comparatively late comers to Yucatan and that for this reason the older inhabitants of the country looked down upon them. Moreover, the chronicles show that Uxmal, the Xiu capital, was not founded until comparatively late (at the beginning of the Third Period), consequently mention of the Tutul Xiu in such an early event as the third may simply be a late interpolation in the record due again to local pride in the antiquity of ancestry.

The fourth episode in the chronicles is the Discovery of Bakhalal or Ziancaan in Katun 8 Ahau or 6 Ahau, and with this event Maya history may be fairly regarded as having emerged from its mythological beginnings, and subsequent events may be accepted as historical facts. To begin with, Bakhalal is the first place-name mentioned in the chronicles which still attaches to a perfectly definite and well-known locality. This, together with the fact that the present place of the same name is situated on the southeastern frontier of Yucatan, suggests that Bakhalal was one of the first stopping-places of the Mayas in the new

country after their departure from their former homes somewhere to the south. Corroboratory evidence that Yucatan was colonized from the east may also be found in several of the early Spanish writers, notably Lizana.

With the discovery and settlement of Bakhalal, then, the history of the Mayas in Yucatan properly begins; and since our sources emanate from those whose tenure of the country had already exceeded a thousand years, this important event must have seemed to them, as the centuries rolled by, an indestructible starting-place which the mists of tradition could not obscure nor the forgetfulness of men and the failure of records push forward. It marked the point beyond which mythology could not advance, and before which, going backward, they did not have to look to divine sources for their origin. The occupation of Bakhalal, according to the chronicles, lasted for about sixty years only, during Katuns 4 Ahau, 2 Ahau, and 13 Ahau, which, following my correlation of Maya and Christian chronology,¹ correspond to the period 460-520 A.D. No mention is made of the contributory causes which led to the abandonment of Bakhalal. It is possible that this locality may have been unhealthful and fever-ridden in former times as it is to-day, and that an unusually high death rate awakened the people to the deadly character of their new home. At all events, the city was abandoned as soon as another suitable location could be found. As one chronicle puts it: "In these years that they ruled Bakhalal, it occurred then that Chichen Itza was discovered,"² showing apparently that the search for a new home was still being prosecuted.

At the beginning of Katun 11 Ahau, or about 520 A.D., Bakhalal was abandoned and Chichen Itza, destined to become the greatest city in the new land, was founded. Here for the

¹ 'The Correlation of Maya and Christian Chronology,' Sylvanus Griswold Morley, *Papers of the School of American Archaeology*, No. 11. *A.J.A.* XIV, 1910, pp. 193-204. The dates in the Christian era assigned to the several events of Maya history here presented are not fixed with certainty. Other correlations of Maya and Christian chronology have been proposed by Señor Pio Perez, Professor Eduard Seler, Mr. C. P. Bowditch, and Mr. J. T. Goodman, no two of which, however, agree. In the article above quoted, I have set forth the reasons which led me to adopt the correlation therein suggested.

² *The Maya Chronicles*, D. G. Brinton, pp. 96 and 101.

first time the people whose wanderings we have been following have a name applied to them. They are called the "Itzas" and their capital "Chichen Itza, the Mouths of the Wells of the Itzas," after the two great natural wells around which the city grew up. For one hundred and twenty years, or until the close of Katun 1 Ahau, 640 A.D., the Itzas occupied this site. The chronicles give nothing as to the details of this period, and but little more concerning the causes which brought about its closing event, the abandonment of Chichen Itza. One account says that the city was destroyed, while the others merely mention the fact that it was abandoned. With this event The First Historical Period of the Books of Chilán Balam closes.

In point of archaeological importance this period is probably surpassed by no other. During its course, but particularly in the latter part of it, the Mayas were called upon to face new conditions of life and to grapple with problems arising out of a somewhat new and unfamiliar environment. The reaction of this environment on the old civilization makes the period one of extreme importance in the study of the Maya culture. It lasted from 9-15-0-0-0 to 10-4-0-0-0 in Maya notation, and included within its span the eclipse of Copan, Quirigua, Seibal, Yaxchilan, Tikal, and Naranjo, and the rise of Chichen Itza. In a word, it witnessed the transference of power from the south to the north and the passing of the Old Empire and the birth of the New.

The Second Period opens with "The Holy Men of the Itzas," as they are called in one of the accounts, in search of new homes which they find after wanderings covering sixty years. In Katun 6 Ahau, 700 A.D., a land called Chakanputun was seized and occupied by a force consisting of thirteen divisions of warriors. As was the case with Bakhalal and Chichen Itza, the two place-names previously mentioned in the chronicles, it has been possible also to associate Chakanputun with a definite geographical locality. There is, and was at the time of the Spanish Conquest, a place on the western coast of Yucatan not far from Campeache called Champoton. It was probably somewhere in this vicinity that the Itzas settled after their long wandering. The fact that every place-name mentioned in the chronicles beginning with Bakhalal may be referred to a well-

known locality bearing the same name to-day, where more or less extensive ruined remains have been found, is of itself a strong indication that the chronicles are histories and not merely imaginative narratives.

That the Itzas were obliged to seize Chakanputun would seem to imply that it was held by some hostile people, though no clew as to their identity is given. After this event, there is nothing further recorded for the next two hundred and sixty years, during which we are left to infer that the Itzas remained in possession of Chakanputun. In Katun 8 Ahau, about 960 A.D., an unexpected catastrophe abruptly set the Itzas wandering again, and terminated this period. The Second Chronicle from The Book of Chilan Balam of Chumayel thus records this event: "In this katun (Katun 8 Ahau) perished Chakanputun by fire, which destroyed it quickly, and suddenly consumed it."¹ Again the Itzas were compelled to seek a new home, or, as another chronicle vividly portrays it: "In this katun those of the Itza were under the trees, under the boughs, under the branches to their sorrow."² With this event the Second Historical Period of The Books of Chilan Balam comes to an end, 640-960 A.D.

Since the original sources themselves are silent with regard to the events of this period, any attempts to fill such an hiatus in the record must necessarily be only suggestive. I consider it, however, not improbable that during the sojourn at Chakanputun the Initial Series method of counting time, a heritage from the older civilization of the South, fell into disuse. The latest Initial Series date known, one in the Dresden Codex, falls, according to my correlation, within this very Katun 8 Ahau in which Chakanputun was abandoned. The subsequent wanderings of the Itzas and the fading recollections of their former homes, the latest of which at this time was fully four hundred years behind them, may possibly account for its discontinuance. Certain it is that the Initial Series did not long survive the transplanting of the Maya culture in Yucatan, but gave way to an abbreviated method of counting time. Along with many another product of the older civilization, doubtless it fell into disuse under the pressure of changing conditions.

¹ *The Maya Chronicles*, D. G. Brinton, pp. 167 and 170. ² *Ibid.* pp. 96 and 101.

The opening of the Third Period again finds the Itzas homeless. Instinctively, however, they seemed to have turned again to Chichen Itza, their first real home in the new country, and during Katuns 6 Ahau and 4 Ahau, 960-1000 A.D., they wandered back to that city and reoccupied it, somewhere near the close of the tenth century. About this time, also, the important city of Mayapan seems to have been founded. It is probable that after the destruction of Chakanputun some of the Itzas did not return to Chichen Itza, but wandered elsewhere. One chronicle records that "the remaining of the Itzas coming out of the woods from under the branches . . . established the land called Zaclactun Mayapan."¹ This would seem to indicate that not all of the Itzas returned to Chichen Itza, but that some of them at least settled elsewhere.

There now began an era of great prosperity for the country. At the beginning of Katun 2 Ahau, 1000 A.D., Ahcuitok Tutul Xiu, the leader of the Xiu or Tutul Xiu, founded Uxmal and established his rule there. According to Bishop Landa these newcomers were of a somewhat different race than the Itzas, speaking a language similar to that of Tabasco. They seem, however, to have been warmly received by the Itzas, and an alliance between the rulers of Chichen Itza, Uxmal, and Mayapan was immediately formed, each ruling jointly with the others. This tripartite confederacy lasted for about two hundred years, or until Katun 8 Ahau, 1200 A.D., when it was abruptly terminated by the plot of Hunnac Ceel, at that time the ruler of Mayapan. This event must have been one of first importance in the ancient history of Yucatan, since each of the five chronicles mentions it. In spite of this fact, however, the causes leading to the disruption of the confederacy are very imperfectly set forth. One thing alone seems clear: Chac Xib Chac, the ruler of Chichen Itza, having plotted against Hunnac Ceel, the ruler of Mayapan, was driven from Chichen Itza by Hunnac Ceel in the war that followed. Two of the chronicles state that the trouble arose over a banquet which the ruler of Chichen Itza gave to Ulil, the ruler of Itzmal, while another more vaguely records that it was "because of the festivities with those of Itzmal."² Probably neither represents the true cause of the war, though

¹ *The Maya Chronicles*, D. G. Brinton, pp. 167 and 170. ² *Ibid.* pp. 155 and 160.

both indicate that a plot was hatched against Hunnac Ceel by the rulers of Chichen Itza and Itzmal. Hunnac Ceel, however, assisted by seven other leaders, gained a decisive victory and drove the Itzas from their city, dispersing their thirteen divisions of warriors.

The names of Hunnac Ceel's seven allies in this war, Ah Zinteyut Chan, Tzuntecum, Taxcal, Pantemit, Xuchueuet, and Itzcuat, and Kakaltecat, are significant. Over half of them, as Dr. Brinton has pointed out,¹ appear to be Nahuatl. Strange as this spectacle of a Maya ruler surrounded by Nahuatl allies may appear, it is corroborated by no less an authority than Bishop Landa, who says that the ruler of Mayapan called to his aid Mexican allies to keep his subjects in check. With the plot of Hunnac Ceel and the dispersion of the Itzas, this period closes, 960-1200 A.D.

As with the preceding periods, the chronicles are silent concerning its details, and it is to archaeology we are obliged to turn for a reconstruction of the background. After the destruction of Chakanputun, the horizon of Maya history extends. Heretofore, that is, during the First and Second Periods, the wanderings and adventures of a single people, the Itzas, are set forth; but after this point the record enlarges. The Itzas, no longer a small tribe, split into several bands, each seeking a different home. Another people, the Tutul Xiu, at best only very remotely connected with the Itzas, enters the country and colonizes it. New cities are established. The record may be said to have lost its provincial character. During this Third Period, I believe the Maya civilization, untainted as yet by any Nahuatl influence, spread over Yucatan. Scores of settlements purely Mayan in architecture and art grew up. This was the Golden Age of Yucatan, the last great period of Mayan supremacy. Kabah, Labna, Chacmultun, Sayil, in fact most of the ruined cities now found so abundantly throughout the country, date, in my opinion, from this period. After the plot of Hunnac Ceel, the closing event of the Third Period, and the introduction by him of Nahuatl allies into the country, conditions change, and Maya history enters its last great period under a strong foreign stimulus.

¹ *The Maya Chronicles*, D. G. Brinton, p. 129.

The war which resulted in the overthrow of Chac Xib Chac of Chichen Itza lasted, according to one chronicle, for fourteen years, ending some time in Katun 6 Ahau, 1220-1240 A.D. In the following katun, 4 Ahau, the Itzas and Itzmalans, as a retaliation for their previous defeat, raided the land of Mayapan and seized the capital. The first fifty years of the Fourth Period were probably taken up with civil war and the readjustment of power made necessary by the breaking up of the confederacy. Who succeeded to the supreme authority formerly held jointly by the rulers of Chichen Itza, Uxmal, and Mayapan, the chronicles do not state. Bishop Landa, however, says that the chief power was held by the Lords of Mayapan, who abused their position to such an extent that they were obliged to call in Mexican mercenaries to protect them against the rising indignation of their subjects. Finally there came a day when the outraged Mayas could no longer endure this tyranny, and under the leadership of Tutul Xiu, the Lord of Uxmal, they assassinated their ruler and, after sacking the city of Mayapan, abandoned it. The chronicles, for the most part, agree that Mayapan was destroyed some time during Katun 8 Ahau, or about the middle of the fifteenth century. The reasons given for this upheaval are rather vague: "because of the seizure of the fortress and the fortified town by the joint government in the city of Mayapan."¹ This can hardly refer to anything but the destruction of Chichen Itza by Hunnac Ceel two hundred and fifty years before, though the hatred engendered by that event, it would seem, should have subsided long before the time we are now considering. The account of this event in one of the chronicles, however, the second from The Book of Chilán Balam of Chumayel, agrees somewhat with the version given by Bishop Landa: "There went forth the governor Tutul with the chiefs of the country; . . . in this katun the men in the centre of the town were driven out, and the chiefs of the country lost their power."² After the destruction of Mayapan the country was split up into a number of petty chieftaincies, and, as the chronicle literally records, "the chiefs of the country lost their power." This event closes the

¹ *The Maya Chronicles*, D. G. Brinton, pp. 156 and 161.

² *Ibid.* pp. 167 and 171.

Fourth Historic Period of The Books of Chilan Balam, 1200–1450 A.D. or thereabouts.¹

This period was not, I believe, one in which the Maya influence was dominant, but, on the contrary, one during which Maya ideals gave way before Nahuatl pressure. At Chichen Itza, for example, there are several structures which are strongly Nahuatl in plan or decoration. The "Ball Court," typically a Nahuatl conception, has been found surely up to the present time in only two Maya cities, Chichen Itza and Uxmal. Professor Seler and Dr. Spinden have both pointed out several other undeniable traces of Nahuatl influence at Chichen Itza. How then did this Nahuatl influence reach a Maya city in the first place, and why should Chichen Itza have been the place where this influence was most strongly felt?

I suggest that the answers to both of these questions are to be found in the chronicles. Hunnac Ceel's association with Nahuatl allies, and the subsequent settlement of these allies in Yucatan, a fact actually mentioned by Bishop Landa, disposes of the first. The following answer to the second is only suggested; but in view of the fact that Chichen Itza is the only Maya city where Nahuatl influence strongly coerced the art, and since the chronicles develop a reason for this, the correctness of the answer becomes more probable. After the defeat of Chac Xib Chac by Hunnac Ceel and the dispersion of the Itzas, I believe it not unlikely that the ruler of Mayapan may have given Chichen Itza to his Nahuatl allies as their share of the spoils. Their direction of the affairs of the conquered Maya city would have introduced sufficient Nahuatl pressure to have influenced subsequent activities, and there would have resulted conditions such as are actually found. A strong culture like the Maya, however, would not have succumbed entirely even to such a dominant influence as the Nahuatl, and consequently a compromise would be effected by which the conquerors gave much but received more.

¹ The discrepancy between the Maya time periods and the corresponding dates in Christian chronology arises from the fact that the Maya katun in reality is only $19\frac{1}{2}$ years long, whereas in the present discussion it has been treated as a period of 20 years, in order to facilitate the calculations. This causes an error of 16 years in a period of 55 katuns, the number said to have elapsed from the occupation of Bakhalal to the Spanish Conquest, the whole of which has been corrected at this point.

With the destruction of Mayapan, all semblance of concentrated power vanished. All the sources, native as well as Spanish, agree unanimously that after this event the country fell upon evil days. A pestilence, "the general death," devastated the country in Katun 4 Ahau, at the close of the fifteenth century, carrying off great numbers, and in the following Katun 2 Ahau, during the first two decades of the sixteenth century, small-pox swept over the land, claiming thousands of victims. Coincident with these calamities civil war broke out. With the fall of Mayapan, the last vestige of central authority seems to have been swept away. The country, divided into a number of petty divisions, each warring with the others, was soon prostrated by the horrors of war and famine. Indeed, so swift was this final phase of Maya history that it were hardly worth while to call it the Fifth Period, though such it really was. Pestilence, internecine strife, and finally foreign conquest speedily put an end to this once great civilization, the seeds of whose downfall, however, had been sown long before the discovery of America.

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